

ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 2, 2001

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I speak today in honor of the 41st anniversary of the Republic of Cyprus. It was on October 1 in 1960, that Cyprus became an independent republic after decades of British colonial rule.

I am very fortunate and privileged to represent Astoria, Queens—one of the largest and most vibrant communities of Greek and Cypriot Americans in this country.

It is truly one of my greatest pleasures as a Member of Congress to be able to participate in the life of this community, and the wonderful and vital Cypriot friends that I have come to know are one of its greatest rewards.

Cyprus and the United States have a great deal in common. We share a deep and abiding commitment to democracy, human rights, free markets, and the ideal and practice of equal justice under the law.

While we are pleased to celebrate this joyous day in Cyprus history, it is with a heavy heart in light of the September 11 terrorist attacks. I am deeply appreciative to the people of Cyprus and the Cypriot-American community who have extended their voices of support and have expressed strong condemnation for the terrorist attacks. In fact, within hours of the attacks, Cyprus President, Glafcos Clerides, strongly denounced the terrorist acts.

Unfortunately, Cyprus is not without its own difficult history; 37 percent of this nation is still occupied by a hostile foreign power, and it has been for more than 25 years.

On July 20, 1974, Turkey invaded Cyprus, and to this day continues to maintain an estimated 35,000 heavily armed troops. Nearly 200,000 Greek Cypriots, who fell victim to a policy of ethnic cleansing, were forcibly evicted from their homes and became refugees in their own country.

Every year, on or around July 20, 1, along with my dear friend Representative BILIRAKIS, sponsor a Special Order to remember the anniversary of the Turkish invasion in a tradition that has become one of our proudest traditions.

Despite the hardships and trauma caused by the ongoing Turkish occupation, Cyprus has registered remarkable economic growth, and the people living in the Government-controlled areas enjoy one of the world's highest standards of living. Sadly, the people living in the occupied area continue to be mired in poverty.

Today, Cyprus is one of the leading candidate nations to join the European Union in the next round of expansion, in 3 to 4 years.

While we are hopeful that a unified Cyprus will join the EU, fortunately, it is not a precondition to accession as the leader of the Turkish Cypriot side, Rauf Denktash has continued to balk at resuming peace talks. He rejected U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's invitation to resume talks for a unified Cyprus.

In the times we are facing, it is clear that divisions among people create harmful, destruc-

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

tive environments. The United States has expressed its unwavering support for a peaceful solution to the Cyprus problem and I wholeheartedly agree. The relationship between Cyprus and the United States is strong and enduring. We stand together in this bittersweet time, celebrating democracy and freedom while mourning a horrific tragedy.

Thank you.

AIR TRANSPORTATION SAFETY AND SYSTEM STABILIZATION ACT

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 2, 2001

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, on September 21, the House passed H.R. 2926, legislation providing billions of dollars of financial relief to the airline industry from the September 11 terrorist attack. Unfortunately, H.R. 2926 was rushed through the legislative process without any independent assessment of the actual losses incurred by air carriers or consideration by the relevant committees. And it was considered on the House floor under a rule that prohibited any amendments and limited debate to one hour.

Although I support the well-meaning intentions that motivated H.R. 2926 and the paramount need to provide aid to the victims of the September 11 tragedies, I oppose this fundamentally flawed bill and want to take a few minutes to explain my reservations.

H.R. 2926 fails to address essential measures, such as airline security and assistance to displaced workers, but includes numerous provisions with cost ramifications that have not been considered carefully. While the bill provides specifically for \$15 billion in relief to the airlines, the final cost of the bill could easily be far higher. Further, the bill establishes a compensation scheme for victims that could commit federal taxpayers to pay more to the families of deceased Wall Street executives than to the families of the firefighters who lost their lives trying to rescue others. This may well be a policy choice that Congress would have ultimately made, but it is not a policy choice or precedent that Congress carefully considered or even debated.

NO PROVISIONS TO IMPROVE AIRLINE SECURITY

The most important element of an airline relief bill is improving airline security. Unless airline security is improved, any airline bailout may fall. No matter how many billions of taxpayer dollars are given to the airlines, no airline can stay afloat if Americans refrain from flying.

Unfortunately, the bill contains no funding for airline security measures. It also contains no provisions to enhance security, such as making airline security a federal responsibility. The legislation thus does little to assure Americans that flying will be safe again.

The rationale for failing to address airline security is that airline security should remain an airline responsibility and should not be "federalized." But this is exactly the same reasoning that is responsible for our current, deeply flawed system of airline security. In past years, the airline industry has resisted im-

October 2, 2001

plementing stringent security measures on the grounds that the costs are prohibitive. As recently as the week following the September 11 attacks, an Alaska Airlines executive testified that he believed Americans would be unwilling to pay a three-dollar surcharge on their airline tickets to fund security measures.

NO SUPPORT FOR DISPLACED WORKERS

In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, airlines reportedly have already laid off over 100,000 workers, and some airlines are refusing to honor the standard severance provisions of their labor contracts. H.R. 2926, however, provides no relief whatsoever for these workers and their families. It contains no funds for laid-off workers who now lack health insurance. It contains no assistance for job-training that would help these workers find new employment. And it contains no funds to help support laid-off workers and their families during the search for new employment.

At the same time that the legislation ignores the needs of laid-off workers, the bill protects airline executives who earn millions of dollars in compensation. The legislation provides that to qualify for loans, airlines must freeze current executive compensation at 2000 levels for two years and limit severance pay to twice that amount. This means that airline CEOs can continue to earn astronomical salaries and receive multi-million dollar severance packages.

Airlines do not have to limit executive salaries at all to qualify for the other benefits provided in the legislation, such as the \$5 billion in grants awarded by the bill, the limits on liability, and the potential federal payment of increased airline insurance premiums.

EXCESSIVE RELIEF FOR THE AIRLINE INDUSTRY

The airline industry deserves federal support after the September 11 attacks. But I am concerned that the level of relief in the bill may go beyond what is reasonable.

After the September 11 attacks, the Federal Aviation Administration grounded all airplanes for two days and gradually resumed service thereafter. This order caused a cash crunch for the airlines. They could take in no revenue during the shutdown, but remained responsible for many fixed costs. Airlines estimated that these losses amounted to \$330 million per day. The airlines' strongest case is for federal relief to compensate them for this loss. (It should be noted, however, that even without a federal order, the airlines—which had the primary responsibility for safety—would have likely halted flights until new safety procedures were in place.)

But the legislation provides many other forms of relief. The rationale for this additional relief is tenuous at best. There was no independent review of the need for these transfers of billions of dollars from federal taxpayers to the airlines.

\$5 Billion in Grants. Under the legislation, \$5 billion in grants are available to the airlines that can be used to offset any future losses between now and the end of the year that are attributable to the attack. Many other types of businesses will have downturns in revenues resulting from the attacks, but only the airline industry is likely to receive this special relief. Moreover, the bill provides minimal guidance on how the airlines are to calculate the losses. For example, the bill leaves open the possibility that an airline could choose to reduce its